

THE GULL

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY

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Yeh Shou-Jen

Formosan Magpie.

International Birding Fair Highlights Saving Wetlands

This past November, I attended the 2006 International Birdwatching Fair in Taiwan, representing Golden Gate Audubon. Hosted by the Wild Bird Society of Taipei (WBST), this event, now in its eighth year, is supported not only by the Taiwanese bird-watching community, but also by the local mayor, corporate sponsors, and the public at large.

Organizers estimated that between six and eight thousand people attended the two-day conference held at Guandu Nature Park. So the next time you visit the Ilha Formosa, don't be surprised to see locals showing off GGA decals and donning GGA hats. Located just outside Taipei at the junction of the Danshui and Jilong rivers, the spectacular 140-acre Guandu park is a breeding and wintering ground for more than 229 species of birds. During the rare moments I was able to sneak away from my day-long duties, I caught glimpses of Grey Herons, Great Egrets, and Little Egrets from the nearby observation tower overlooking this Important Bird Area.

Although I was the only Western delegate at the conference, representatives from organizations throughout Asia participated, including the Wild Bird Society of Japan, the Malaysian Nature Society, the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel, the Wild Bird Club of the Philippines, the Ornithology Group of Sri Lanka, and the

BIRDING FAIR continued on page 12

San Francisco: Birdiest City?

Every spring since 2000, birders in cities and counties across the country have participated in an enjoyable and invigorating contest to see which location can document the most bird species within its boundaries in a 72-hour period. This year, Golden Gate Audubon will sponsor San Francisco's entry in America's Birdiest City/County Competition.

San Francisco will enter the seventh annual contest in the "Small Coastal City" category. Because cities and counties differ in size and vary in topography—for instance, inland versus coastal—there are nine categories, including Coastal Pacific County, Small Inland City, and Inland Eastern County. Last year, the Small Coastal City category was won by Dauphin Island, Alabama, with 170 species recorded. Given the large avian diversity in San Francisco, we have a chance of achieving similar results.

Each city and county can select the optimal 72-hour window for participation as long as it falls within the months of April or May. To maximize the potential number of species seen, our count will be held from Friday, April 13, to Monday, April 16. This should allow us to find lingering winter birds, uncommon residents, and early spring arrivals. The 72-hour count period will begin and end at 9 a.m., with the bulk of activity expected to take place on Saturday, April 14, and Sunday, April 15.

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The Golden Gate Audubon Society was founded January 15, 1917, and became a chapter of National Audubon in 1948. Golden Gate Audubon Society Supporting Membership is \$25 per year. Renewals should be sent to the Golden Gate Audubon office. The board of directors meets the last Monday of every month (except August and December) at 7:30 p.m. in the chapter office in Berkeley.

The Gull is published nine times per year by the Golden Gate Audubon Society. The deadline for submissions is five weeks prior to the month of publication. Special third-class postage paid in Oakland, CA. Send address changes to office promptly. The post office does not forward *The Gull*.

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Design and layout e.g. communications

Golden Gate Audubon: 90 Years Young in 2007

Though the Audubon Association of the Pacific has cause to be proud of its preciousness on many counts, its ability to cry may have come a bit late. Be kind to "The Gull" and a little bread upon the waters will produce marvelous results. Watch me soar.

Thus began the very first issue of *The Gull*, published in January 1919.

Our Audubon organization was actually established two years earlier, formed as Audubon Association of the Pacific. Within a month of its founding in 1917, the association was working to persuade oil companies to stop pumping oil from ship ballasts near the Farallones, where lighthouse keepers regularly noted oil slicks. By 1919, the association had convinced California oil companies to pump ballast into a single tank and unload it in port where oil was separated from the water and then processed.

Other conservation issues of the day included saving ducks from slaughter in California's rice fields, stopping indiscriminate hunting, trapping, and poisoning of passerines, controlling feral cats, and working to prevent the draining of the Klamath Lakes. Within three years, the Audubon Association of the Pacific was a significant and respected member of the California conservation community. It was founded on sound science and well-reasoned treatment of the issues, and it set the course we follow today.

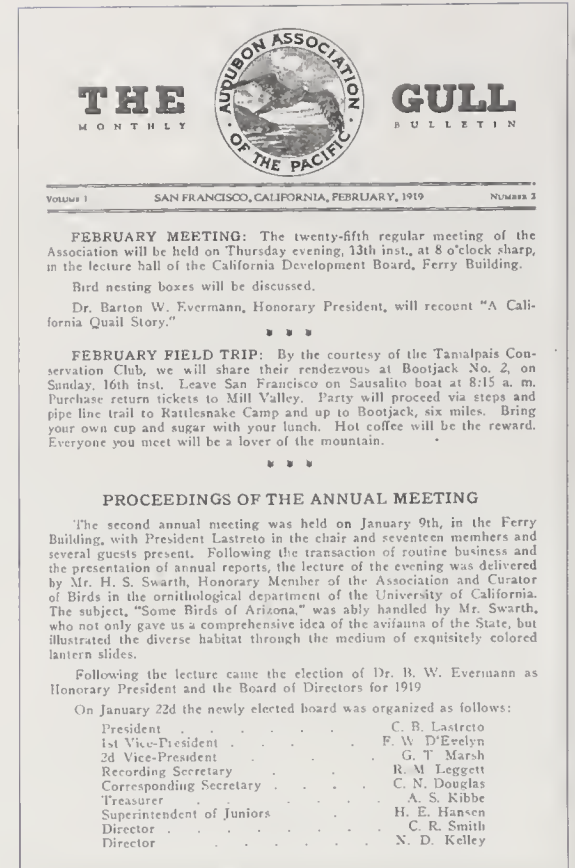
This year, we celebrate our 90th anniversary—the chapter was renamed the Golden Gate Audubon Society in 1947—by honoring the work and accomplishments of the talented, dedicated people who have contributed so much to our organization and to birds and wildlife habitat over the past nine decades. In upcoming issues of *The Gull*, you will read about the people and places that constitute our history. You'll enjoy tales of past Christmas Bird Counts in Oakland and San Francisco and learn about environmental changes in the Bay Area that have affected our native birds and other wildlife.

Celebrating the past is not all we plan for 2007. Golden Gate Audubon continues to grow and expand its influence as a leading birding, wildlife conservation, and environmental education organization in the Bay Area. We are building on our past accomplishments as we take on new and greater challenges. Read *The Gull*, check our website, and discover for yourself the many opportunities to become involved in this strong, grassroots organization that has a fascinating history and a lively future.

by Marjorie Blackwell and Dan Murphy

HOW YOU CAN HELP

The 90th Anniversary Committee is seeking photographs and information about Golden Gate Audubon leaders, birding trips, and events in the chapter's history. If you are able to help, please contact Judith Dunham, *Gull* managing editor, at 510.841.8149.



The gull logo first appeared on the newsletter's second issue.



Michael Martin

Volunteers planting native seedlings at Harding Park.

GGA Volunteers Save Bird Habitat in San Francisco

Approximately 150 Golden Gate Audubon volunteers contributed two beautiful Saturdays in November to restore and preserve habitat for birds in San Francisco. On November 11, dozens of volunteers cleaned up trash and debris, removed invasive weeds, and planted native seedlings at Pier 94 wetlands on the city's southern waterfront. Thanks to ongoing efforts of GGA and the Port of San Francisco, shorebirds are returning to this former industrial wasteland and roosting and nesting in the thriving marsh. A Wilson's Snipe was even spotted in a tidepool.

A huge thank-you goes to the hardworking volunteers, including interns from Literacy for Environmental Justice (LEJ) and Sunset Scavenger; to San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department and to LEJ for providing the seedlings; to the Port of San Francisco for Port-O-Let facilities; and to Hanson Aggregates for coffee and refreshments.

A week later, more than 100 volunteers took part in Golden Gate Audubon's annual Restore-A-Thon at Harding Park and the Presidio, supporting our campaign to restore California Quail habitat in San



Michael Martin

The Pier 94 team getting ready to plant natives.

Francisco parks. At Harding Park, the volunteer crew cleared away invasive species and planted 250 native plants. The workers were rewarded by a potluck lunch at the home of GGA member and Save the Quail Coordinator Bill Murphy. Meanwhile, at the Presidio, another crew, led by Damien Raffa of the Presidio Trust, pulled out truckloads of invasive weeds and planted 1,000 native seedlings on Presidio hillsides formerly covered by iceplant. The crew enjoyed Starbucks coffee and bagels during break time.

We extend our thanks to Restore-A-Thon sponsors: the Presidio Trust and the San Francisco Department of Recreation and Parks, for donating plants, work tools,

and gloves for the event, and to Starbucks Coffee, for supplying coffee and cups.

Hats off and special thanks to all the volunteers who contributed their time and energy for a day; to Noreen Weeden, GGA board member and chair of the San Francisco Conservation Committee, for helping organize both the Pier 94 and the Restore-A-Thon events; to Damien Raffa for helping organize and run the Presidio Restore-A-Thon; to Bill Murphy for helping organize the Harding Park Restore-A-Thon; and to GGA Volunteer and Membership Coordinator Michael Martin for orchestrating everything.



Noreen Weeden

Truckloads of invasive plants were removed from the Presidio.

Volunteer Shares Her Lifelong Appreciation of Nature

For GGA volunteer Susan Groves, her interest in nature and the outdoors has roots in her childhood. Growing up in Wisconsin, she enjoyed backpacking trips, canoe excursions to Quetico Provincial Park, and lots of other wilderness outings with her family. Susan acquired her interest in birds from her mother, though as a teenager she was initially embarrassed by her mother's hobby.

"I have a clear memory of bringing friends home after school," Susan says, "and when we entered the front door, we were confronted with weird bird noises. My mother, working in the kitchen, was listening to bird call recordings on the record player. 'Red-breasted Nuthatch,' said the narrator, followed by a series of strange sounds. We all cracked up."

"Much later in life," Susan continues, "I was providing humor and embarrassment for our teenage daughter!"

Golden Gate Audubon has benefited greatly from Susan's commitment to the natural world. From early 2002 through late last year, she served as field trips coordinator, ensuring that GGA had a robust schedule of trips to destinations as close by as Golden Gate Park and as far away as Mono Lake, Yosemite National Park, and even Churchill, Canada.

Ironically, Susan had never been on a GGA field trip until she became coordi-

nator, though she had birded locally with a friend. Her decision to volunteer was prompted by an announcement in *The Gull* seeking a volunteer to organize the trips. Susan had just retired from teaching history and women's studies at Berkeley High School and San Francisco State University. Her husband, Eric Anderson, showed her the notice, and with little preparation she took on the job. Susan credits the field trip leaders for cushioning the landing. "That I was able to pull it off and get together a series of trips in those beginning months was due entirely to the generous responses I got from field trip leaders," she says.

Susan has always recognized that field trips are one of GGA's most important programs. In her view, they provide experiences that lead people to value nature and the wilderness—an appreciation that she regards as a necessity in today's world.

Thinking back on her years as coordinator, Susan treasures most her contact with the many skilled volunteer trip leaders and wishes she could credit each one in print with a special tribute. "The leaders are the unsung heroes of the organization," she says. "I admire them because of their passion for what they do. They lead trips because of their own intense involvement in birding and their desire to share their skills and knowledge with others. Is it infectious? Just look at the number of trips that GGA



Susan Groves, GGA volunteer, with East Oakland students on a field trip to Arrowhead Marsh.

Leslie Longbach

schedules and the interest level in those trips!" She also feels that she has learned a lot from the leaders—about birding surely and also, she says, about having "a positive, curiosity-driven commitment to a greener worldview of life."

This commitment to education and the environment naturally led Susan to volunteer for GGA's Eco-Oakland Program. Although she has passed the field trip coordinator job to another volunteer, she continues to work with East Oakland elementary school students and their families and teachers in the classroom and out in the field. "How will there be anything left of this planet if we don't teach our children to love it?" she wrote earlier this year. "If you care about the future, this is where you have to be!"

by Judith Dunham, Publications Committee

Donations

Thank you for your generous donations to support our many conservation, education, and member activities!

GOLDEN GULL (\$1,000 AND MORE)

Marjorie and Bill Blackwell

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The Dean Witter Foundation: Volunteer and Membership Development Programs

National Fish & Wildlife Foundation Nature Restoration Trust: Eco-Oakland Education Program

Pacific Gas & Electric Company: Eco-Oakland Education Program



SPEAKER SERIES

Talks in the Speaker Series begin at 7:30 p.m. At 7 p.m., delicious snacks are served by hospitality coordinator Susanne Shields. Speaker Series coordinator is Sarah Reed.

Avian Flu—The Greatest Threat of Our Lifetime?

Regina Phelps and Sidney England

Friday, January 12

San Francisco

Health experts say it is a matter of *if*, not *when*, the next influenza pandemic will impact the globe. Cutting through the maze of medical information, Regina Phelps will discuss the influenza virus, the history of influenza pandemics, the current state of disease outbreaks, and what you and your family should be doing to be ready. Sidney England will address how birds might contribute to the potential human threat from avian influenza. Regina Phelps, an internationally recognized expert in the field of emergency management, is founder of Emergency Management & Safety Solutions. She is a board member of Audubon California, the California Advisory Board for the Trust for Public Land, and the International Crane Foundation. Sidney England, PhD, is an ornithologist and the director of environmental planning for the University of California, Davis.

Wings in the Night: A Celebration of Bats

Patricia Winters

Thursday, January 18

Berkeley

Bats are the only major predators of night-flying insect pests. One colony of 20 million Mexican Freetail Bats in Texas, for example, consumes 250 tons of insects nightly. Around the world, bats are vital in the pollination and distribution of many plant species, including approximately 450 cash crops on which humans depend.

Fourteen of California's 25 species of bats are now waiting for federal protection due to their rapid decline in numbers. Over the past 20 years, the state has lost up to 80 percent of its bats, a tragedy that is being repeated worldwide. Patricia Winters, education and rehabilitation director for the California Bat Conservation Fund, will talk about the vital role of these beneficial



Bill Rainey

California Leaf-nosed Bat (*Macrotis californicus*).

mammals. Patricia is one the few individuals in California licensed to possess live bats for educational purposes, and her presentation will include live, tame bats.



Grant Reed

Bateleur Eagle, Botswana.

The Birds and Wildlife of Botswana: A Photographic Journey

Grant Reed

Thursday, February 15

Berkeley

Tuesday, February 27*

San Francisco

Grant Reed's armchair journey will cover some of Africa's most famous safari areas. The trip begins in the arid Kalahari and follows an ancient migration route to the vast Makgadikgadi Salt Pans, where hundreds of thousands of flamingos flock to breed. To the northwest lies the renowned Okavango Delta teeming with birds and other wildlife. Savuti, in northeast Botswana, is where the elephant-hunting lions prowl the savannah. Beyond lies the Chobe River, known for the highest density of African elephants. Grant Reed is a guide with Letaka Safaris. Letaka Safaris, which he cofounded, has long been known as *the* birding company in Botswana.

San Francisco: County Fair Building, San Francisco Botanical Garden, Golden Gate Park, 9th Avenue at Lincoln Way. Directions: www.sfbotanicalgarden.org/visiting/page2.html

Berkeley: Northbrae Community Church, 941 The Alameda (between Solano and Marin). Directions: www.northbrae.org/directions.htm

* Beginning in February, the San Francisco Speaker Series will take place on the fourth Tuesday of the month.



FIELD TRIPS

\$ Entrance fee

 Biking trip

Detailed trip descriptions are located on our website at www.goldengateaudubon.org.

Palo Alto Baylands

Monday, January 1

Kathy Jarrett, 510.547.1233 (no calls after 9 p.m.), kathy_jarrett@yahoo.com

Meet at 9:30 a.m. at the duck pond at the baylands in time for the 9:57 a.m. high tide. We should find many species on bay, ponds, and sloughs. Much of the trip will be on paved trails and designated bike lanes with part on gravel and on roads. If the weather is good, we will bicycle to Mountain View Shoreline, Stevens Creek Trail, and return to the duck pond, making a loop. If weather is bad, we will drive to some of the best viewing areas. For directions by transit and car, see detailed description in the December Gull. Rain cancels trip (a make-up date will be scheduled).

San Francisco Botanical Garden

Saturdays, January 6, February 3,
March 3, 10 a.m. – noon

Angie Geiger and Nancy DeStefanis, SF Nature Education; Darin Dawson, SF Botanical Garden Docent, 415.387.9160

Meet at front gate of garden, 9th Ave. at Lincoln Way. Families welcome. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Cosponsored by SF Botanical Garden, SF Nature Education, and GGA.

Palo Alto Baylands and Mountain View Shoreline

Saturday, January 6, 8 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Dan Murphy, 415.564.0074, murphsf@yahoo.com

Meet at duck pond near Baylands Preserve. The accessible levees and boardwalks overlooking the preserves are excellent spots to view 60 to 80 species wintering in the South Bay wetlands, marshes, and open water. Ducks, shorebirds, waders, gulls, raptors, and many more make this an ideal birding experience. Wear clothes appropriate for cold, wet weather. Rain will not cancel trip.

From Hwy. 101 just south of Dumbarton Bridge, exit at Embarcadero Rd. East. Stay to right and be careful not to take Oregon Expressway. Drive east over freeway to end of street, turn left, and continue to duck pond on left. Gate is locked until 8 a.m.; meet in parking lot to right of gate.

Lafayette Reservoir

Contra Costa County

Saturday, January 6, 8 a.m.

Denise Wight, 510.547.6822 (w), 925.377.0951 (h), blkittiwake@yahoo.com

Meet at southeast end of spillway parking lot. We'll look at birds in oak woodland and planted pines, as well as waterbirds on reservoir. Bald Eagle has wintered here in the past. Walk is mostly along a paved bike trail. We will walk the entire 2.7-mile trail at a slow birder's pace.

Take Hwy. 24 east from Berkeley. Exit Acalanes Rd. and take Mt. Diablo Blvd. toward Lafayette. Sign for Lafayette Reservoir is on right. Parking fee is \$6. \$

San Francisco Botanical Garden

Sundays, January 7, February 4,
March 4, 8 – 10:30 a.m.

Allan Ridley and Helen McKenna, 415.566.3241; Ginny Marshall, 650.349.3780

Meet at front gate of garden, 9th Ave. at Lincoln Way. This delightful section of Golden Gate Park has several microhabitats that attract an array of resident, migrant, and vagrant birds.

Let's Go See Some Cranes!

Rio Vista, Solano County

Sunday, January 13, 8:30 a.m.

Harry Fuller, 415.344.2363, anzatowhee@yahoo.com

Meet at eastern end of Orinda BART lot. We'll carpool to area east of Rio Vista to see Sandhill Cranes, Tundra Swans, raptors, ducks, and shorebirds. Bring non-birding friends and turn them into birders when they see cranes dancing in the mist. Expect cold. Trip ends at midafternoon so bring lunch. *Trip is limited to first 25 people who sign up with leader.*



Eleanor Briccetti

Barrow's Goldeneye, a species that winters at Lake Merritt.

Las Gallinas

Marin County

Sunday, January 14, 9 a.m.

Pamela Llewellyn, 510.843.7904 or 925.413.8329 (cell), seacreature219@sbcglobal.net

On this half-day trip, we'll see a variety of wintering ducks, shorebirds, and raptors. Take Hwy. 101 north and exit at Lucas Valley Dr. Go east on Smith Ranch Rd. to county park. Take a sharp left to sewage treatment ponds. Drive past headquarters to parking lot on left.

Bodega Bay

Sonoma County

Sunday, January 21, 10 a.m.

Bruce Mast, bmast@alumni.rice.edu

Meet at second parking lot after entry kiosk to Doran Regional Park. We will begin by birding the rich Bodega Harbor area and Bodega Head, covering as many spots as time and birds permit. Bring lunch. We may bird until 3 or 4 p.m.

SF Birds at Merrie Way

Sundays, January 21, February 26, 8 a.m.

Harry Fuller, 415.344.2363, anzatowhee@yahoo.com

Meet at Merrie Way, the unpaved lot at west end of Pt. Lobos above Cliff House at Land's End. We'll search out the wintering birds of coastal San Francisco: loons, shorebirds, up to eight species of gull, sparrows from the north woods. Expect wind. Rain does not cancel. Email leader for Muni info if needed.

Lake Merritt and Lakeside Park

Oakland

Wednesdays, January 24, February 28,
9:30 a.m.

Hilary Powers, 510.834.1066,
hilary@powersedit.com; Ruth Tobey,
510.528.2093, ruthtobey@earthlink.net;
Travis Hails 510.658.7235 (no calls after
9 p.m.), travishails@yahoo.com

Meet at large spherical cage near Nature
Center at Perkins and Bellevue Sts. We
will bird the area near the center, then
go down lake toward Embarcadero or up
path to Children's Fairyland.

Take 12, N, or NL bus to Grand and Perkins. Walk into
park on Perkins, or park in free lot at boathouse, 568
Bellevue. Cage is at far end of lot from boathouse.

East Shore State Park

Berkeley Waterfront

Friday, January 26, 9 – 11 a.m.

Bob Lewis, 510.845.5001,
rlewis0727@aol.com

Meet at SeaBreeze Market at corner of
University Ave. and Frontage Rd. We'll
check out the shoreline at ebbing tide for
shorebirds, then walk through Berkeley
Meadow. If time and weather permit,
we'll also check Berkeley Pier for winter-
ing ducks, loons, and grebes.

Lake Merritt

Oakland

Saturdays, January 27, February 25,
8 a.m.

Travis Hails, 510.658.7235 (no calls after
9 p.m.), travishails@yahoo.com

Meet at spherical cage near Nature Center.
First half of trip focuses on waterbirds and
second half is in parklands bordering lake
where we expect to see smaller birds.
Vagrant species occur frequently at Lake
Merritt. Route is handicapped accessible.
For directions, see January 24 trip.

Panoche Valley

San Benito County

Saturday, February 10, 8 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Chris Carpenter, 510.639.1262 (day),
510.547.2201 (eve),
cgbirds64@comcast.net

Meet at intersection of Hwy. 25 and J-1
in Paicines, 12.5 mi. south of Hollister.
From there we will drive east on J-1 to

GGA Members Invited to Alcatraz Island

Join National Park Service biologist Christian Hellwig for a series of birding sessions on Alcatraz Island, offered exclusively to Golden Gate Audubon Supporting members. The trips, with GGA coleaders, begin on Thursday, February 8, and continue on the second Thursday of the month through August. Bob Lewis is the GGA coleader for the first trip.

La Isla de los Alcatrazes (Island of the Seabirds) is home to approximately 2,000 pairs of Western Gulls, Brandt's Cormorants, Black-crowned Night-Herons, Snowy Egrets, Pigeon Guillemots, Pelagic Cormorants, Black Oystercatchers, and California Gulls, as well as several passerines. Many of these colonies are unique in the Bay Area, and the Brandt's colony is one of only two known estuarine colonies on the North America coast. Come prepared to see these birds at a closer range than you may have ever imagined possible. Christian will share his knowledge of these colonies and the challenges he faces in ensuring their safety.

Here is what we'll be looking for over the next few months. February: Migratory passerines linger on the island, and gulls, night-herons, and Pelagic Cormorants return. March: Brandt's Cormorants and egrets return; gulls begin defending territories. April: Many birds are engaged in building nests and some are laying eggs; Pigeon Guillemots return. May: Night-herons start fledging, and cormorants hatch. June: All species are hatching; other chicks begin fledging. July: Most Cormorants and Western Gulls fledge. August: All birds have fledged or are fledging. Other possible sightings: Black Oystercatchers.

The trips are limited to 10 participants. Reserve a spot by contacting Tara Zuardo, GGA office manager, at 510.843.2222 or ggas@goldengateaudubon.org. Once you have received confirmation, book your space on the ferry with Alcatraz Cruises at 415.981.7625 or www.alcatrazcruises.com. Buy a ticket (\$21.75) for the 9:30 a.m. Early Bird Tour. The ferry departs from Pier 33, near the corner of Bay St. and the Embarcadero. Each walk is about 1½ hours, timed so you can return on the 11:15 a.m. boat, arriving at Pier 33 at 11:30. Only drinking water (no food) is available on Alcatraz. Eating or smoking is allowed only in the dock area. Come prepared for variable weather.

To reach Pier 33 using transit, take the F streetcar, adjacent to the Ferry Building, or the No. 10 Muni bus (fare: \$1.50). If you are arriving on BART, exit at the Embarcadero Station and board the F streetcar. If you are driving, parking is available at the lot across the street from Pier 33 (early bird available) and other area garages.

For other information about the trip, please contact Christian Hellweg at christian_hellwig@nps.gov.

Panoche Valley. This trip traverses raptor habitat, which usually produces Golden Eagle. Expect Mountain Bluebirds, Phainopeplas, and Vesper Sparrows. Be sure to fill your gas tank before leaving Hollister, and carpool from the Bay Area if possible. Bring lunch and warm clothes. Rain cancels.

Candlestick State Recreation Area

San Francisco

Sunday, February 11, 8:30 – 10:30 a.m.

David Armstrong, 415.584.6650,
darmstrong99@yahoo.com (e-mail
preferred)

Meet at parking lot near kiosk at main
entrance to recreation area. We will look
for ducks and shorebirds. Rain cancels.

Exit Hwy. 101 at Monster Park and follow signs to recreation area (across street and to east of stadium).

Arrowhead Marsh

Travis

Saturday, February 17, 9 a.m.

Pamela Llewellyn, 510.843.7904 or
925.413.8329 (cell),
seacreature219@sbcglobal.net

Meet at the end of Edgewater at the
East Bay Regional Park Garretson Point
parking lot. We'll see lots of wintering of

FIELD TRIPS continued on page 8

Traveling Far Afield with GGA

Golden Gate Audubon is organizing two big trips in 2007 exclusively for Supporting Members. The trips are limited to eight participants, and the fees are less than customarily charged by professional outfitters. For more information, contact Ruth Tobey at 510.528.2093 or ruth_tobey@earthlink.net.

Texas Coast Migration Spectacle

April 21 – 27

GGA will partner with highly respected tour company Field Guides. The 2006 bird list for this Field Guides trip totaled 203 species. Jesse Fagan, tour leader, has birded in Texas for many years. Fee is \$1,450, plus a \$150 tax-deductible contribution to GGA.

Churchill, Manitoba

June 7 – 17

Dave Quady, leader of many GGA field trips, returns to Manitoba to share with other birders the chance to see a variety of charismatic breeding species including Common Eider, Willow Ptarmigan, Bohemian Waxwing, and Common Redpoll. A few days of birding near Winnipeg and in Manitoba's boreal forests will round out the Churchill portion of the trip. Fee will be announced.



Common Eider.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

GGA's Latin America Committee is planning the following three trips for 2007. For details, contact Bob Risebrough at 510.549.2476 or pelecanus@igc.org.

Dominican Republic

February 11 – 18

Leader is Kate Wallace, vice-president of the Hispaniolan Ornithological Society, who will be accompanied by GGA escorts Bob Risebrough and Dana Gardner. Trip is wait-listed.

Panama Canal Zone

June 9 – 22

Leader is Guido Berguido, who led the highly successful GGA trip to Panama in 2006. GGA escort is Dana Gardner. Cost will be lower than previous GGA Panama trips but should produce just as many birds.

Natural and Cultural History of Panama

June 20 – 30

Mornings will be devoted mostly to birds; the principal guide will also be Guido Berguido. Evening walks will look for amphibians and other night creatures. Afternoon seminars will explore topics in tropical and conservation biology with the expected participation of scientists of the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute. Trip will be geared to teachers (families welcome) who wish to assemble educational material. The coordinator is Bob Risebrough.

FIELD TRIPS from page 7

shorebirds, ducks, raptors, and passerines and possibly Clapper Rails. Bring a scope if you have one.

Take I-880 south to Hegenberger, then turn west on Hegenberger to Edgewater Dr. (by the shopping center). Turn right on Edgewater and drive to lot at end of street.

Coyote Hills Regional Park

Fremont

Saturday, February 24, 9 a.m.

Anne Hoff, 510.845.5908,
Anne2210b@sbcglobal.net

Meet at visitor center parking lot for this half-day trip. We will bird the varied habitats of this jewel of a park, looking for wintering waterfowl, waders, and songbirds. We may also have a nice assortment of raptors. Heavy rain cancels.

From East Bay, take I-880 south to 84/Dumbarton Bridge exit. Turn right and continue west. Exit on Paseo Padre Pkwy. Turn right and continue north for 1 mile, then turn left on Patterson Ranch Rd. to Coyote Hills. Self-serve parking permit requires \$5.

Honey Lake and Greater Sage-Grouse

Saturday – Sunday, March 24 – 25

Dave Quady, 510.704.9353,
davequady@att.net

We'll search Lassen County for Greater Sage-Grouse, Bald Eagles, and other wintering birds of the Eastern Sierra. *Trip is limited to first 20 participants who sign up with leader after January 27.* Detailed information will be provided to those confirmed. Lodging is available in Susanville; primitive camping, in Honey Lake State Wildlife Area. Bring warm clothing, lunches for both days, and scope if you have one. Carpooling is encouraged.

American River Trail

Sacramento County

Saturday – Sunday, April 14 – 15

Kathy Jarrett, 510.547.1233 (no calls after 9 p.m.), kathy_jarrett@yahoo.com

We'll leave from Emeryville Amtrak sta-

tion on 7:30 a.m. train on Saturday, ride from Sacramento to Folsom and stay overnight, then ride trail back to Sacramento and take 3:35 p.m. train on Sunday. *Advance reservations are necessary.* Sign up with leader, who will provide details.

Yosemite's Bird Life

Friday – Sunday, June 1 – 3

Dave Quady, 510.704.9353,
davequady@att.net; Bob Lewis

The lower and middle elevations of Yosemite National Park are alive with singing birds in early June. A variety of habitats supports a rich diversity of bird life, typically including seven flycatchers (four *Empidonax*), three vireos, and seven warblers. *Trip is limited to first 20 participants who sign up starting on February 26.* Detailed information will be provided to those confirmed on the trip. Carpooling is encouraged. Participants should be prepared to walk about 3 miles each day.



Birders with plenty of frequent flier miles were able to see a mega-rarity this month by traveling to the Salton Sea (IMP), where GMC found an adult Ross's Gull at Red Hill Marina on the 17th. Per AJ, news of this rare bird sighting made headlines as far away as Chile.

LOONS TO DUCKS

Closer to home, birders also had a few rarities to celebrate, starting with a juvenile Yellow-billed Loon (*Gavia adamsii*), discovered Nov. 18, in Pescadero Marsh, SM (ET, RT; mob). Over the next week, numerous birders admired this 3rd county record. A Nov. 11 seawatch from Pt. Lobos in the Presidio, yielded a Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel near Mile Rock Lighthouse, SF (MB). The SE Farallon Island (SF) female Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster*), first reported on Oct. 20, remained at Sugarloaf through Nov. 4 (JCS). Three female Harlequin Ducks were sighted from Ocean Blvd. in Moss Beach, SM, on the 29th (RT). A Long-tailed Duck was found at Stafford L. in Novato, MRN, Nov 25-27 (DE; LB).

RAPTORS TO ALCIDS

On Nov. 7, a juvenile Zone-tailed Hawk (*Dendroica dominica*) flew over Summit Rd. southeast of Hwy 17, SCL (DS). A dull-plumaged American Golden-Plover (*Pluvialis dominica*) provided an ID challenge Nov. 6-12 at CCFS, SCL (SR, RJ; mob). The CBRC added this species to the review list in 2004 because the species may be rarer than historical records indicate. Pacific Golden-Plovers were reported this month at San Leandro Marina, ALA (BR); Schollenberger Park in Petaluma, SON (LH); Radio Rd. in Redwood Shores, SM (EL); and Mavericks at Pillar Pt., SM (SM; ME).

DENWR hosted 3 or 4 Pectoral Sandpipers, a couple Stilt Sandpipers, and 2 Ruffs through midmonth at New Chicago Marsh and CCFS, SCL (mob). A PRBO shorebird count for Schollenberger Park in Petaluma, SON, recorded a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper on the 7th (LH). A seawatch from Ocean Blvd. in Moss Beach, SM,



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Lapland Longspur.

reported the return of 3 Ancient Murrelets on the 29th (RT).

DOVES TO THRASHERS

On Nov. 5, a Short-eared Owl flushed from Meeker Slough (CC) and made repeated laps around the rocky islets just offshore (ES). Another Short-eared Owl was observed cruising the fields at Hayward RS on the 18th (AP). A wandering Lewis's Woodpecker visited the Presidio, SF, on the 12th (PS). That same day, a male Yellow-bellied Sapsucker turned up in the eucalyptus trees at Ed Levin RP, SCL, where it remained a couple weeks (DWe; mob). A tail-less Tropical Kingbird was located on Zanker Rd. in Alviso, SCL, on Nov. 6 (SR, RJ; mob). On the 18th, a Cassin's Kingbird was found near Sunset Beach at Drake's Estero, PRNS, MRN (JC).

An adult Northern Shrike drew birders to Kent Island in Bolinas Lagoon, MRN, Nov. 6-7 (KH). On the 30th, a hatch-year

Northern Shrike was found at the entrance to the Jepson Prairie Preserve on Hwy 113, SOL (BC). Small flocks of Mountain Bluebirds were reported from Patterson Pass Rd., ALA, on the 11th (MaM) and from Robinson Rd. and Hwy 113, SOL, on the 18th (DWi). A Sage Thrasher turned up on Garin Ave. in Hayward, ALA, on the 22nd (DWo). On the 8th, an itinerant Phainopepla was discovered about 1/2 mile from the end Henry Rd., NAP (ADM).

WOOD WARBLERS TO FINCHES

A male Black-throated Blue Warbler visited a backyard in Moss Beach, SM, on the 10th (JRB). Birders also reported 4 Palm Warblers, 3 Black-and-white Warblers, and a Northern Waterthrush. A Green-tailed Towhee posed briefly for a photo at Ogier Ponds, SCL, on the 24th (BW). An art-loving American Tree Sparrow visited the Wildlife Gallery and Studio in Bolinas, MRN, on the 9th (KH). Beginning the 24th, birders who studied the sparrow flocks at the "Weed Farm" north of Ano Nuevo SR, SM, reported Vesper and Sage Sparrows (RT; ADM, JL, SS). A Harris's Sparrow set up camp at Coyote Pt. CP, SM, beginning the 27th (EK; RT, KO, AE). Lapland Longspurs passed through on Nov. 1, with reports from Hayward RS, ALA (BR), and Abbott's Lagoon, PRNS, MRN (RS; mob). Nov. 27 an Indigo Bunting was photographed in a Castro Valley backyard (ALA) on the 27th (SH). Finally, an Orchard Oriole returned to the Fort Mason Community Garden, SF, on the 9th (HC).

Semicolons separate original observer(s) from subsequent observer(s). Abbreviation "mob" = many observers, "oob" = other observers. Information is compiled from BirdBox transcripts and regional listservs; the author apologizes for any errors or omissions. Special thanks to Brent Plater for assistance in compiling data.

Abbreviations for Observers: ADM, Al DeMartini; AE, Al Eisner; AJ, Alvaro Jaramillo; AP, Andy Pedler; BC, Brent Campos; BR, Bob Richmond; BW, Bill Walker; DE, Daniel Edelstein; DN, David Nelson; DS, David Suddjian; DWe, Dave Weber; DWi, David Wimpfheimer; DWo, Debbie Wong; EK, Elisabeth Koster; EL, Eugenia Larson; ES, Emilie Strauss; ET, Francis Toldi; FV, Frank Vanslager; GMC, Guy McCaskie; HC, Hugh Cotter; JC, John Comstock; JCS, Juan Carlos Solis; JL, John Luther; JRB, J. R. Blair; KH, Keith Hansen; KJR, Karen Jo Rippens; KO, Kris Olson; LB, Len Blumin; LH, Lisa Hug; MaM, Mark Miller; MB, Michelle Brodie; ME, Mark Eaton; MiM, Michael Mammoser; PS, Paul Saraceni; RJ, Richard Jeffers; RS, Rich Stallcup; RT, Ron Thorn; SH, Jim Shea; SM, Sonny Mencher; SR, Steve Rottenborn; SS, Stefan Schlick

Abbreviations for Counties and Others: ALA, Alameda; CBRC, California Bird Records Committee; CC, Contra Costa; CCFS, Coyote Creek Field Station; CP, County Park; Cr., Creek, Cyn., Canyon; DENWR, Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge; EEC, Environmental Education Center; GGP, Golden Gate Park; IMP, Imperial; L., Lake; MRN, Marin; Mt., Mount; N., North; NAP, Napa; NWR, National Wildlife Refuge; OSP, Open Space Preserve; PRBO, Pt Reyes Bird Observatory; PRNS, Pt Reyes National Seashore; Pt., Point; Rd., Road; Res., Reservoir; RP, Regional Park; RS, Regional Shoreline; S., South; SB, State Beach; SCL, Santa Clara; SF, San Francisco; SFBO, SF Bay Bird Observatory; SM, San Mateo; SOL, Solano; SON, Sonoma; SP, State Park; SR, State Reserve; WPCP, Water Pollution Control Plant



The sound of an agitated Bewick's Wren caught my ear as I rinsed lettuce at my sink. There he was, atop my rosemary shrub, giving anyone within earshot the distinct idea that something was definitely annoying him. Down the brick steps came a sassy red squirrel who regularly—all too often according to the wren—raids the supposedly squirrel-proof bird feeder full of patio mix. As soon as the robber started to climb the tree, the wren flew to the feeder and upgraded his scolding to a furious level. As he shouted, he darted around the leafy branches above the feeder and back down to its base. Soon the wren was joined by an equally irate Oak Titmouse and a cantankerous Scrub Jay. Thanks to this chorus, the squirrel decided he'd wait until later for his snack, so he scampered down the trunk and back up the steps.

Mobbing is a common behavior among the bird community. A disparate group of mixed species will align themselves against a common enemy, usually a predator such as an owl, hawk, snake, or household cat, or even a human. Jays may be obnoxious at times, but they are the first to alert the entire bird and animal community of danger.

Once I opened a sliding door to the deck and flushed a Western Screech-Owl that had been napping during the day on a light fixture. It flew silently into a nearby pine and was instantly attacked by a flock of jays. The owl closed its eyes and tried to hunker down and look like a pinecone, but the jays were relentless. I moved around the house to get a better view and was rewarded when the owl escaped the mob and landed in a shrub about three feet away. It was as surprised as I was! With a direct look, it blinked its eyes slowly, clicked its beak at me, and flew away. The dreaded owl was gone.

Self-protective behavior includes several strategies. Obviously, flight is the most efficient means of escaping enemies. Keen vision and excellent hearing, along with protective coloration, are keys to alerting birds to danger. Many birds may also adopt certain threatening postures and will puff up their feathers to appear larger. The bird may



Bob Lewis

Killdeer in the midst of its typical broken-wing display.

look ridiculous to us, but to another bird or animal the added size might be enough to dissuade it from attacking.

Mobbing is an effective fallback position. There have even been instances where the mob has actually done in the predatory bird. Some observations: Arctic Terns killed a Snowy Owl, Herring Gulls ganged up on a Barn Owl and killed it, and an American Kestrel was overwhelmed by a flock of Red-winged Blackbirds. Fighting between bird species is usually more bluff and bluster, since the attackee can fly to escape. A common sight is a hawk or vulture turning slowly in the sky, trying to ignore a small, feisty bird whose nest the larger bird may have neared. Even notorious bullies, crows and ravens, are subject to attacks. No matter what its size, a parent bird becomes a warrior when guarding its young.

Another odd behavior is called displacement activity. During mobbing, one or more of the birds doesn't participate in the attack of the presumed predator; instead, it nonchalantly starts preening or pecking at insects on a tree trunk. This seems very odd and not at all like a bird frightened of being eaten. It's as if the bird can't decide how to behave—fearful or aggressive—so it acts inappropriately.

Another interesting behavior is a distraction display used by nesting pairs to

divert the attention of predators from finding the birds' eggs or young. While trail-riding one morning, I was amazed by the acting abilities of a female grouse. Even though her flock of chicks was right with her, she flopped on the ground, flailing like a wounded bird, hoping to distract anyone who was hungry to go after her in her pathetic state. Wouldn't the predator be surprised when she flew away and her chicks had scattered under nearby clover? A Killdeer's broken-wing act is accompanied by pitiful shrieks, meriting this breed the Oscar for overacting. Wrentits have developed their own technique for total distraction. Near the nest sites, they have been observed doing nosedives off their perches, falling to the ground, then fluttering back up for a repeat performance.

An antidisplay is the act of freezing, common among many juvenile birds, who are alerted by a special parental call when danger draws nigh. These birds remain motionless and are usually aided by cryptic coloration, a type of camouflage. All of these behaviors are innate, having been learned eons ago.

The Bewick's Wren is one of my favorites, as you may know. If I were a squirrel, I don't believe I'd tangle with an angry wren—or any protective parent bird. Ounce per ounce the tiny is formidable—but adorable.



BIRDING CLASSES

EARLY SPRING BIRDING BY EAR AT ALBANY ADULT SCHOOL

As spring approaches and brings increasing daylight, birds become more vocal. Males sing to stake out territories and advertise for mates. Join birdsong expert Denise Wight in studying the songs of resident birds as well as those of species returning to the Bay Area to breed. Denise has taught birding courses in the Bay Area for a number of years. Instructor's web page: <http://blkittiwake.com>.

The class, sponsored by Golden Gate Audubon, is offered through Albany Adult School, 601 San Gabriel Avenue, Albany. Register online at www.albany.k12.ca.us/adult/birding.html or in person at the school. Fee is \$50.

Lectures: Wednesdays, February 28 – March 21, 7 – 8:30 p.m.

Field Trips: Saturdays, March 3 – 24

BIRDING CLASSES IN SAN FRANCISCO

The next group of evening classes taught by Joe Morlan and endorsed by Golden Gate Audubon starts in early February. Slides illustrate all lectures, and the text for all classes is *A Field Guide to Birds of North America*, fifth edition, by the National Geographic Society. *The Sibley Guide to Birds* is recommended as an adjunct text for Ornithology II and III. Participants should bring binoculars and field guides to class. Optional field trips on weekends may be arranged.

All classes meet from 7 to 9:15 p.m. in room 307, Marina Middle School, 3500 Fillmore at Bay Street. Free parking is in the school lot off Bay Street. Fees are \$130 for each seven-week course. To enroll

online, go to www.evolve.com/ce.ccsf/, or print out and fax the online registration form. For further information call 415.561.1860.

Joe Morlan is co-author of *Birds of San Francisco and the Bay Area* and *Birds of Northern California*. He is also coordinator of the recorded Northern California Birdbox sponsored by Golden Gate Audubon.

Field Ornithology I

Introduction to birds and birding, combining basic field skills with the study of bird ecology, biology, evolution, and behavior. Meets on Tuesdays.

Part A (EA101): February 6 – March 20

Part B (EA105): March 27 – May 22

Field Ornithology II

In-depth study of the identification and status of North American birds, including falcons, grouse, quail, and rails. Meets on Wednesdays.

Part A (EA110): February 7 – March 21

Part B (EA115): March 28 – May 23

Field Ornithology III

Continuing study of North American land birds, including nuthatches, wrens, kinglets, gnatcatchers, thrushes, and thrashers. Meets on Thursdays.

Part A (EA120): February 8 – March 22

Part B (EA125): March 29 – May 24

Californians Vote to Support the Environment

Last November, California voters showed their support for the environment in several significant wins at the polls.

First, Californians made a smart investment in our state's water and land resources by passing Proposition 84, the Clean Water, Parks, and Coastal Protection Bond. In passing Proposition 84, we agreed to \$5.4 billion in bonds to ensure the availability of safe drinking water, improve local water supply reliability, strengthen flood protection, and preserve California's parks, lakes, rivers, beaches, bays, ocean, and coastline.

We also said no to one of the most anticonservation initiatives in decades, Proposition 90. We clearly understood that Proposition 90, if passed, would have jeopardized environmental protections and our quality of life, as well as led to a flood of new litigation and billions in new costs imposed on taxpayers.

Unfortunately, Proposition 87, the Clean Energy Initiative, did not pass. But overall, Californians voted pro-environment, speaking loud and clear in favor of protecting our natural resources. We extend a heartfelt thanks to all of you who spread the word, worked for a campaign, and voted for conservation. Golden Gate Audubon looks forward to working together in the future to continue protecting California's habitat for birds and other wildlife and for the benefit of humanity.

Golden Gate Audubon Board Nominations

Golden Gate Audubon will have two slots open for elected members of the board of directors, with terms beginning on July 1, 2007. Member petitions for nominations must be submitted to the GGA office by February 15, 2007, 12 weeks before the board election, which will be held on May 15, 2007. Petitions must be signed by a minimum of 100 (maximum of 500) members in good standing. Names of candidates will be published in the April 2006 *Gull*, along with ballot forms for members to fill out and send in by May 15. If you wish to submit a petition, call Elizabeth Murdock at 510.843.9912 or board development committee chair Jacqui Smalley at 510.655.0998.

BIRDING FAIR from page 1

Hong Kong Birdwatching Society.

At first blush, Golden Gate Audubon may seem an unlikely player among this cast of characters. But it didn't take long for me to realize that we are all working for the same goal—protection of birds and education of the public—by fighting analogous battles across the globe. This year's theme was wetlands, so I was invited to speak about GGA's history and restoration work. When I finished my presentation, I appreciated talking with other groups and sharing insights into our common challenges.

The WBST, for example, works in a city of nearly three million people and faces many of the same urban user clashes as we do in the San Francisco Bay Area. The Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel was called upon to collaborate with the local military to help resolve conflicts between fighter planes and raptors and initiate a monitoring program. And everyone I spoke to was interested in discussing how we could ensure that renewable energy such as wind power continues to grow globally, but with minimal impacts on birds.

I don't mean to give the impression that this trip was all work and no pleasure. I did carve out time to explore this magnificent island. I visited temples, soaked in hot springs, meandered through night markets, and stood atop the highest building in the

world. Maybe best of all, I accepted an invitation to embark on a three-day birding trip to the interior highlands of central Taiwan.

A self-proclaimed "intermediate" birder at best, I had no idea what I was getting into when I signed up. Complete with 5:30 a.m. wake-up calls and cold treks at 9,600 feet in the pouring rain, this trip had all the key elements for guaranteeing endemic species. I came away with some rare and some common—but all new to me—species. We saw the Alpine Accentor and White-whiskered Laughing Thrush at the parking lot near Mt. Hehuan. The elusive male and female Mikado Pheasants finally appeared after several passes down the same windy road outside Chingjing Farm. And thanks to our skillful guide who knew exactly which sign to shine the flashlight on as we crept down the road at a leisurely 10 kilometers per hour, the Collared Owlet graced our presence in the Alishan National Forest.

All in all, this was a fantastic trip, and I am grateful to the Wild Bird Society and Golden Gate Audubon for making it possible. Perhaps the most striking resemblance to the Bay Area was the hardworking volunteers, who helped in innumerable ways, from picking me up at the airport to translating my Powerpoint from English to Mandarin, to arranging my meals. I thank them for making my experience so rewarding.

by **Samantha Murray**, Conservation Director

BIRDIEST CITY from page 1

The rules are very simple: We will field as many teams and observers as we can, canvassing the city to find as many different species as possible. All species conclusively identified by sight or sound from land within the city limits are fair game, including birds seen up to one mile offshore. Participants will be assigned specific areas to cover in the time slot(s) for which they register. There is no need to tally individual birds, as on a Christmas Bird Count; rather, the focus is on finding locally uncommon or rare birds that will help increase the species total. Rarities need to be documented in the same fashion as for the CBC. Each area leader will submit a report to the compiler, with the final results to be submitted to the national organizer.

We encourage birders of all skill levels to participate. There is no charge to take part in the event. If you're a beginner, we'll team you up with a more experienced observer. You can sign up for one or more four-hour count periods online at www.goldengate-audubon.org or by calling the Golden Gate Audubon office at 510.843.2222 to register by phone.

This should be an exciting event, and who knows—maybe you'll be the one to spot the rare bird that helps San Francisco finish at or near the top of its class!

by **David Armstrong**, Compiler

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